

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A magnetic recording medium having a ~~55 nm or less~~ thickness magnetic layer with a thickness 50nm or less formed ~~on a major~~ over a surface of an elongated nonmagnetic support by ~~performing~~ a vacuum thin film forming technique, ~~said magnetic recording medium being slid over a magnetoresistive effect magnetic head or a giant magnetoresistive effect head to reproduce a signal,~~

wherein an angle  $\theta$  which is ~~formed by~~ a growth direction of magnetic particles in a ~~columnar structure in a longitudinal cross-section of said magnetic layer and with respect to a~~ line normal to a ~~longitudinal direction of~~ said nonmagnetic support, satisfies the following relation:

$$\theta_i - \theta_f \leq 25^\circ.$$

where  $\theta_i$  is an angle of ~~theta in an initial growth portion of~~ for said magnetic layer, and  $\theta_f$  is an angle of ~~theta in a final growth portion of~~ for said magnetic layer.